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Statement submitted by The HETL Association, Inc., a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Ensuring social inclusion and equity through universal access to higher education

The International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association (HETL Association) advocates inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. This report discusses key initiatives developed and led by the HETL Association to foster social inclusion and equity through universal access to quality higher education, such as higher education for a sustainable future, equity and inclusion in higher education, refugee education, and humanistic higher education.

Introduction, Objective, and Purpose

In addition to supporting the theme of the 57th Session of the Commission for Social Development, the HETL Association initiatives also aligns with the ongoing United Nation's programs, Education for All and the Sustainable Development Goals. In keeping with the theme of the 57th Session, the HETL Association has also addressed many of the issues associated with economic, social, and environmental development through higher education. The HETL Association supports research in these areas and has produced many publications to disseminate the findings of this research. The HETL Association has also created a global network of education scholars and leaders, which cultivates international understanding and cooperation among educators.

Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals calls on higher education institutions to create inclusive and equitable education for all. Inclusion and equity are principles that should be an integral part of all educational policies, plans and practices. These principles need to be imbibed in everyday practices in educational institutions and should treat education at all levels as a human right. Universities are challenged to keep up with the ever-changing world and develop students' ability to think and act in ways that promote sustainability and inclusiveness.

The core purpose and objective of the HETL Association is to promote the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 4. The HETL Association does this by conducting cutting-edge research in this field and by creating a global network of education scholars and leaders that come together to create positive change in society and in education.

The HETL Association promotes integrating sustainable development into the curriculum, sustainability in leadership, and promotes university partnerships for sustainable development. To this end, the HETL Association has published many case studies and other empirical research that discusses international collaborations in sustainable development and related fields. For instance, the multi-volume set on sustainable development discusses different theoretical frameworks and models being utilized, the benefits gained, and the challenges encountered in this area.

Overview of Main Issues

The HETL Association provides a forum where scholars, through their research, develop guidelines towards building consensus for equity and inclusion in education. This includes the need for a shared understanding of the rationale for changes. The HETL Association, as a champion for this cause, is committed to working towards a more inclusive and equitable society. Through its various research and book projects, it is mobilizing opinion in favor of the principles of equity and inclusion. A well-functioning education system requires change makers like the HETL Association to

promote and communicate policies that focus on the participation and achievement of all people.

For instance, the refugee crisis is one of the biggest disasters in human civilization. The HETL Association aims to give voice to the common needs, concerns, and aspirations of the refugee population through its three volume series on refugee education by creating a global dialogue, cutting-edge academic research, and sharing of best refugee practices undertaken by educators and non-governmental organizations. The HETL Association aims to provide recognition to those who are working towards imparting education to refugee people and giving them the tools they need to help recover from the effects of conflict and displacement. The world has seen an unprecedented surge of refugees around the world. In their struggle for survival the need for education is a top priority.

In addition, a number of different initiatives have been initiated in universities throughout the world within the last decade, which consider sustainable development as an important issue of higher education. Research is being conducted to adopt sustainability in the form of new study programs that have sustainable development as their area of study. The HETL Association's multi-volume series highlights those strategies and programs that have been implemented by higher education institutions to help integrate sustainability into the curriculum and beyond.

To that end, the series will touch upon and examine related and overlapping issues such as ecological footprints, universities' sustainability performance, campus practices, student led initiatives, partnership with other institutions, sustainability leadership and strategies, sustainability indicators and sustainability literacy. The HETL Association will address the relevant issues at the theory, policy, and practice levels and consider how educational institutions can be transformed through increased attention to making basic and higher education more sustainable in nature.

The HETL Association has also adopted a much-ignored cultural lens of indigenous education and its impact on higher education. It traces the historical trajectory of higher education development resulting from indigenous ways of thinking and acting. The challenges of such interactions in higher education will be discussed by academicians who argue that infusion of indigenous values in higher education will create a strong impact in the areas of teaching, learning and research.

Accomplishments and Challenges

To achieve the aforementioned goals, HETL works in four key areas: networking, conferences, research, and publishing.

Networking: The HETL Association has built one of the world's largest networks of higher education professionals. To date, the HETL Association global network consists of over 100,000 leaders and scholars in the field of education. The HETL Association uses several different communication platforms to connect educators for free, including social media and other web-based platforms.

Conferences: The HETL Association convenes an annual conference that brings together educators from around the world to dialogue on ways to improve higher education and to make it work for all people in all countries. One of our main focus areas is social development and social inclusion.

Research: The HETL Association conducts cutting-edge research in the areas of social development and social inclusion. A few examples of the research that has been done recently includes: 1) refugee education; 2) inclusive and multicultural higher education; 3) sustainability in higher education; 4) indigenizing higher education and 5) humanistic higher education.

Publishing: The HETL Association disseminates its research findings to the world through strategic partnerships with leading academic publishers and educational news outlets. The ultimate goal is to deliver the research results of into the hands of all educators and the public, in order to drive policy change and meaningful decision-making. Within the last three years, HETL has published over a dozen academic books, over a dozen news articles and policy briefs, and over two hundred research articles in academic journals.

Expectations and Recommendations

Research and advocacy efforts on refugee situations has shown that access to education is not universally guaranteed, especially for children having irregular or undefined status. Refugee children are often denied access to education. This educational gap in will have a significant impact and implications for the children's futures, including in relation to employment and earnings. Early childhood educational programs, whether home- or school-based, have proven essential compensatory educational tools for children having refugee or migrant status.

The HETL Association's research has revealed that grass root campaigns are working towards achieving participation and full involvement of disadvantaged groups towards equitable distribution of educational opportunities. The case studies and empirical research highlighted in the volume series emphasizes effective cooperation and coordination towards multisectoral responses that recognizes the social and economic dimensions of inclusion.

Through its research work in social and educational inclusion and equity, the HETL Association has established a coherent understanding of the current movement, and consequent reforms, for cultivating and promoting a more diverse and equitable educational environment. For the future, the HETL Association will focus on the development of human capacity at all levels (individual, local, national, and international) for a more equitable and inclusive world for all.